COTS CHANGE MANAGEMENT WORKGROUP
MINUTES
May 25, 2003
DMV Conference Room
2:00-3:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members:
Farley Beaton, Department of Taxation (co-chair); Philip Vasquez, Department of Motor Vehicles (co-chair), Jim Peters, Virginia Employment Commission; Chris Doss, Virginia Information Providers Network Authority

Presenters, Guests, and Representatives:
Will Prible, Virginia Information Providers Network Authority

Members Absent:
Gary Allen, Virginia Department of Transportation; Paris Ashton, Department of General Services; Bob Haugh, Department of Social Services; Jeanine LaBrenz, Department of Social Services

Staff:
Judy Napier (for Jenny Hunter), Office of the Secretary of Technology

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS
Co-Chairman Farley Beaton convened the meeting of the COTS Change Management Workgroup at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed the members. The meeting was dedicated to discussing the questions sent to members from Farley Beaton based on Chris Doss' presentation on the Communication Champions Network at the meeting on the 14th of May.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes of the May 14th meeting were approved with no modifications, and will be posted to the COTS Web site at www.cots.state.va.us

DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS
The questions created by Farley Beaton resulted from the presentation given by Chris Doss at the previous Change Management meeting on the definition of a Change/Communication Champion. During the discussion, the questions were read by Farley Beaton and then commented on. (The responses included in these minutes represent those made by Farley Beaton and any comments made by the other participants.)

Communication Channels

1. What kinds of channels/venues/liaisons are needed for communications?

Farley Beaton responded that the web has to be a primary communication channel for a group the size of VITA. Much of what has been done on the web to date is very good. Key issue is keeping it current enough that employees learn the value of checking it frequently. Otherwise, we need a way to push an alert to the employees when updates are made.

Within the organizations, it seems that managers and team leaders are key communication channels. Often, an employee gains the best understanding when communication comes from the person they report to, especially if it is combined with the opportunity to ask the supervisor how it impacts the employee specifically. There is value to incorporating the supervisor in the communication path.

Judy Napier commented that AITRS are a tool used to reach others. There should be a variety of people to ensure that a large audience is reached. By focusing on them and letting them in on the information before everyone else, we can ensure their special role in this process and better ensure that information is disseminated.

Feedback Mechanisms

2. What groups 'need a voice' to ensure their participation/ownership and our awareness of what's going on?

    Agency heads
    Technology managers
    Business managers
    Technology staff included in scope of VITA
    Technology staff not included in scope of VITA
    CIO's, PR contacts, HR offices, AITRs

3. What are the most effective mechanisms/vehicles for those groups to use to provide feedback?

    Agency heads – if an effective vehicle for the agency CIO to provide feedback is established, agency heads will rely on that in many cases.

    Technology Managers – Probably need a person to contact to ask questions/provide feedback. These are key people in this transition, as they already "lead" the people being most effected. It seems critical to put them in a position to help lead the transition by ensuring communication and

feedback. Best way to do that might be to establish a person in VITA that they can contact directly for questions/feedback. It is still OK to accomplish by email, but establish a relationship with a person rather than anonymous email. It is also key to encourage technology managers to look to the web site for the most recent information.

Business managers –use the technology managers to allow them to provide feedback and get information. Presumably this relationship already exists in each agency, and the business managers already look to agency technology managers to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. It is possible that they are already looking to the technology managers to get a read on the impact of VITA. We need to recognize this relationship and utilize it.

Technology staff – Good to allow "anonymous" communication over web as we are currently doing. These folks will look to their managers in the agency for guidance and feedback until a new link is established. As soon as practical, that probably needs to be the AITR or a formal change advocate in the agency. However, it is important not to establish more roles than necessary and to make sure each role is clearly defined.

Other options voiced by the members included using the Internet, face-to-face meetings (supplemented by the Internet), daily collaboration meeting focused on VITA, using the CIO to allay fears.

4. **With what frequency should we request/expect feedback?**

   Request it on-going. Expect it most during significant change periods. Tailor the communication vehicles to respond to the likely increase in communication frequency that will occur when employees are directly impacted. Judy Napier added that Cabinet Secretary's request feedback weekly and of course there will be spikes in communication.

5. **Are these feedback mechanisms already 'in the works' in any manner?**

   Some IT shops may use an intranet for communication – if so, links should be prominent to VITA.

   Each IT shop likely has email groups for their employees. Emails could be scripted for them to use to communicate to their staff, promoting the use of the manager as a intermediary communication agent.

   Articles should be prepared to include in agency newsletters as a way to let all state employees (including business staff) the progress of the transition.

Philip Vasquez, Judy Napier, and Chris Doss all added that if it is not already available, adding a homepage to the Intranet, provide links to VITA website on agency homepages, create email groups, open door dialogues.

Communication Champion Network

6. How do we want to define "Communications Network" and "Communication Champion"?

There can't be an effective communication champion if they are not also a VITA change champion. We must start there and think more in terms of a change champion.

The change champion should be the resource in each agency who knows most about the transition – what's going on and why, and what's coming next. They should be able to field 70% of the questions they get, and should have easy access to those who can assist with answers to the rest. Perhaps a special section of the web site could provide tools for the agency change agent. For example, agency change agents could share the questions they are getting as a way of making sure consistent answers are being provided. Bottom line is to be a change agency you have to have the necessary tools and a way to get answers to questions you don't know.

Key decision is the overlap between the agency technology manager, the AITR, the communication champion, etc. Need to focus in on roles so they are minimally duplicative and are clear. We should define the characteristics of the communication/change agent and work with each agency to establish person. Maybe it's the AITR, but that role is not clear yet either.

The other members added that communicators must think in terms of change rather than communication because change must be understood to communicate it.

7. Who could be our *network* of communications champions out in the field?

The manager in each agency responsible for ensuring availability of software systems is key. Users don't use Oracle; they use a software application that depends on Oracle. When there is a problem, they look to the application manager first, so the relationship and dependency already exists. Perhaps that person is our best change champion. An added benefit here is the commonality change champions.

8. What's the best way to engage the Communications Champions?

We should provide agency head with description of the knowledge, roles and responsibilities we are looking for. For example, describe the person who would generally manage applications in the agency, and ask the agency head to name that person. Then make that person feel like they have a special role in this. Maybe that means making them feel like they will get information first, or will have benefit of a training class no one else will have.

9.   How can we leverage the traditional communications functions?

See number 5.

Defining Success

10.   What does success look like?

VITA is established with no significant disruption in IT services, particularly those that impact citizens. IT employees understand reporting relationships and processes. Agencies are able to continue to provide automation to improve operating efficiency and provide new services. The consolidation of technology at state level positions will allow the state to realize savings.

From a change perspective, employees understand the benefits of consolidation and that economies can be generated without disruption/degradation of existing services. Employees understand and accept their role in the new organization. Ultimate success will be when the employees themselves become our best advocates.

Farley Beaton and Philip Vasquez added that we may be successful even though some people will simply not buy-in to the transition no matter what is done.

Role of COTS Change Management Workgroup

11.   Relative to the above questions, how can the COTS Change Management Workgroup assist in developing, implementing, and coordinating the Communication Champion Network?

The change management group could help define the roles, and could define the role of the communication champion, assuming we can resolve overlap in roles. The group could develop the expectations for the role, develop the mechanism for identifying and notifying, and could provide a coordination role for training, etc.

It was also agreed by the group that the COTS Change Management workgroup is not as big as it should/could be and more people should be engaged.

12. What are our next steps? How should the Workgroup tackle development, implementation, and coordination of the Communication Champion Network?

We need to solicit input on the issues described here, and focus closely on the different roles that are being established and how they overlap. Once that's clear, the rest may be much easier.

Following the discussion of the questions Farley Beaton called for an action item to review the questionnaire and return for the next meeting with it any changes. It was also agreed that the group should define and determine the role of AITRs. The group was also encouraged to invite more individuals who may be engaging and provide more insight. It was also agreed that the questionnaire should be disseminated broadly.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30.